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## SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 5773

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State of Washington 59th Legislature 2005 Regular Session

By Senate Committee on Labor, Commerce, Research & Development (originally sponsored by Senators Fraser, Fairley, Kohl-Welles, Rockefeller, Kline and Pridemore)

READ FIRST TIME 03/02/05.

AN ACT Relating to protecting homeowners who hire contractors to remodel or build their homes; amending RCW 60.04.021, 60.04.091, 60.04.250, 18.27.020, 60.04.035, 60.04.011, 60.04.031, 18.27.030, and 18.27.040; adding new sections to chapter 60.04 RCW; creating a new section; and prescribing penalties.

## 6 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

7 The legislature finds that the vast majority NEW SECTION. Sec. 1. 8 contractors and subcontractors engaged in the business constructing or remodeling owner-occupied single-family homes are both 9 10 technically proficient in their trade and able to manage their business 11 dealings in accordance with the highest standards. The legislature 12 also finds, however, that in those relatively few, but all-toofrequent, instances where prime contractors on such construction or 13 14 remodeling projects intentionally or unintentionally mismanage payments 15 received from homeowners that are intended for subcontractors, suppliers, and others, existing provisions are inadequate to protect 16 17 Additionally, the toll on an individual homeowner's homeowners. personal economic and emotional condition 18 that such financial 19 mismanagement by this small fraction of prime contractors is not

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adequately balanced against the responsibilities, obligations, and 1 possible penalties that contractors bear for such mismanagement. 2 Consequently, the legislature finds that it is necessary to (1) clearly 3 establish that prime contractors have a duty to properly manage funds 4 received from or on behalf of homeowners that are intended for 5 suppliers, subcontractors, and others, and to hold those who fail in 6 7 this duty personally responsible for such financial mismanagement; (2) increase awareness by homeowners to the potential for liens against 8 their residence if contractors fail to pay suppliers and subcontractors 9 10 as promised; (3) clarify the right of homeowners to require that prime contractors maintain deposits and other similar payments in a trust 11 12 account for the homeowner, when the homeowner elects to do so; and (4) 13 increase opportunities for homeowners to become better educated about 14 ways to protect themselves from financial mismanagement by those few 15 contractors who are unable or unwilling to meet the financial 16 management standards set by the vast majority of residential 17 contractors in this state.

It is the intent of the legislature that liabilities of contractors and subcontractors arising from mismanagement of funds received from or for the benefit of homeowners should be disfavored by courts addressing whether or not such liabilities should be dischargeable in bankruptcy. If the mismanagement rises to the level of criminal conduct, nothing in this act is intended to interfere with criminal prosecution.

NEW SECTION. Sec. 2. A new section is added to chapter 60.04 RCW to read as follows:

(1) For the purposes of this section, RCW 60.04.021, 60.04.250, and section 6 of this act, "prime residential contractor" means (a) a prime contractor as defined in RCW 60.04.011; (b) the prime contractor's principals, partners, officers, directors, vice principals, authorized purchasing agents, and management employees who have managerial, supervisory, physical, or actual control over the accounting or disbursement of funds received by the prime residential contractor from or on behalf of residential homeowners; and (c) if different from those persons identified in (b) of this subsection, the six persons who received or are entitled to receive the most compensation from the prime residential contractor, regardless of whether the compensation is

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provided as salary, wages, profits, or otherwise, during the term of the contractor's registration.

- (2)(a) A contractor, including a prime residential contractor, has the duty to act in the best interest of a residential homeowner in the receipt, management, and disbursement of all amounts paid by or on behalf of the homeowner to the prime residential contractor for labor, professional services, materials, or equipment supplied by a potential lien claimant. A prime residential contractor shall defend the homeowner against all such lien claims for which the homeowner paid the prime residential contractor.
- (b) A contractor, including a prime residential contractor, shall maintain accurate and complete accounting records and books adequate to identify all moneys received from or on behalf of a residential homeowner and the use or application of such moneys for the payment of the contract price for services, materials, or equipment supplied by any entity having a potential lien claim right against the residential homeowner.
- (3)(a) Except as provided in (b) of this subsection, all funds paid to a prime residential contractor by or on behalf of a residential homeowner for application toward the contract price for labor, professional services, materials, or equipment supplied by a potential lien claimant other than the prime residential contractor shall not be used by the prime residential contractor for any other purpose unless all amounts owed on the potential lien claimant's contract price have been paid in full.
- (b) All funds paid to a prime residential contractor by or on behalf of a residential homeowner shall be presumed to be for application toward the contract price for labor, professional services, materials, or equipment supplied by potential lien claimants other than the prime residential contractor unless, before accepting payment from a residential homeowner, a prime residential contractor provides written notice to the homeowner identifying:
- (i) The potential lien claimants, if any, to which payment is owed, or to which the prime residential contractor intends to apply part or all of the homeowner's payment; and
- (ii) Which of such potential lien claimants, if any, the prime residential contractor does not intend to fully pay from the homeowner's payment, and the reason for less than full payment.

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1 (4) A prime residential contractor shall be personally liable for 2 the full amount of any lien claim recorded pursuant to RCW 60.04.091 3 if:

- (a) Funds paid to the prime residential contractor by a residential homeowner for application toward the contract price for labor, professional services, materials, or equipment supplied by a potential lien claimant other than the prime residential contractor are not paid as provided by this section to a potential lien claimant are withheld from a potential lien claimant or otherwise diverted in violation of this section;
- (b) The prime residential contractor had or should have had knowledge of such use of funds, unless the prime residential contractor shows, by a preponderance of the evidence in defending against the claimed lien, that he or she actually did not know and had no reasonable opportunity to know of such use of funds; and
- 16 (c) A notice of claim of lien is recorded, pursuant to RCW 60.04.091, against the homeowner by a potential lien claimant to which payment was due when the prime residential contractor received payment from the homeowner for the services, materials, or equipment supplied by the lien claimant.
- **Sec. 3.** RCW 60.04.021 and 1991 c 281 s 2 are each amended to read 22 as follows:
  - (1) Except as provided in <u>subsections</u> (2) and (3) of this <u>section</u> and RCW 60.04.031, any person furnishing labor, professional services, materials, or equipment for the improvement of real property shall have a lien upon the improvement for the contract price of labor, professional services, materials, or equipment furnished at the instance of the owner, or the agent or construction agent of the owner.
  - (2)(a) With respect to labor, professional services, materials, or equipment for the improvement of an owner-occupied single-family residence where the aggregate lien claims relating to transactions constituting violations of section 2 of this act exceed the amount of the prime residential contractor's bond that is not available to a homeowner, any person furnishing labor, professional services, materials, or equipment for the improvement of an owner-occupied

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single-family residence shall have a lien:

(i) In the amount of the contract price of labor, professional services, materials, or equipment furnished at the instance of the owner, or the agent or construction agent of the owner, upon any real property owned by the prime residential contractor; and

- (ii) Upon the improvement for no more than one-half of such contract price.
- (b) No judgment foreclosing a lien against improvement to an owneroccupied single-family residence pursuant to this subsection shall be
  entered unless: The court hearing a foreclosure or other collection
  action involving the prime residential contractor finds that the lien
  claimant seeking the judgment foreclosure has made reasonable efforts
  to recover its claim from the prime contractor, including the six
  persons who received or are entitled to receive the most compensation
  from the prime residential contractor, regardless of whether the
  compensation is provided as salary, wages, profits, or otherwise,
  during the term of the contractor's registration, and any other parties
  liable therefor, personally or otherwise.
- (c) A lien claimant shall provide to the department a certified copy of any judgment entered in an action commenced under this section if the judgment is entered against any party that was a registered or licensed contractor or subcontractor. The department may establish by rule and charge a reasonable fee for the processing of documents submitted to the department under this section, the cost of which the court shall include in the award of costs to a prevailing party.
- (3) If a potential lien claimant knew or should have known that a prime residential contractor had been the prime residential contractor or construction agent on a single-family residential improvement project with respect to which:
- (a) A residential homeowner paid the prime residential contractor for goods or services supplied by the potential lien claimant;
- 31 (b) The prime residential contractor failed to pay the potential 32 lien claimant's contract price for such goods or services; and
- 33 <u>(c) The potential lien claimant recorded or otherwise pursued a</u> 34 <u>collection action or claim of lien against the homeowner in the</u> 35 <u>previous three years;</u>
- the potential lien claimant shall have no lien right upon the improvement for labor, professional services, materials, or equipment furnished on behalf of the homeowner at the instance of the prime

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- 1 <u>residential contractor or construction agent employed by a prime</u>
- 2 residential contractor unless, before supplying any service, materials,
- 3 or equipment that may be subject to a lien under this chapter, the
- 4 potential lien claimant has provided written notice to the homeowner of
- 5 <u>all circumstances surrounding the filing, pursuit, and resolution of</u>
- 6 such claim, and the homeowner, in writing, affirmatively instructs the
- 7 potential lien claimant to supply the requested service, materials, or
- 8 <u>equipment</u>.

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- 9 <u>NEW SECTION.</u> **Sec. 4.** A new section is added to chapter 60.04 RCW 10 to read as follows:
  - (1) Any potential lien claimant who has not received a payment from a prime residential contractor within fourteen days after the date required by their contract, invoice, or purchase order must, within thirty-five days of the date required for payment of the contract, invoice, or purchase order, give a notice as provided in subsections (2) and (3) of this section of the sums due and to become due, for which a potential lien claimant may claim a lien under this chapter.
- 18 (2) The notice shall be signed by the potential lien claimant or 19 some person authorized to act on his or her behalf.
  - (3) The notice shall be given in writing to the residential homeowner with a copy given to the prime residential contractor. The notice shall be given by:
  - (a) Mailing the notice by certified or registered mail to the residential homeowner and prime residential contractor; or
  - (b) Delivering or serving the notice personally and obtaining evidence of delivery in the form of a receipt or other acknowledgment signed by the residential homeowner and prime residential contractor or an affidavit of service.
    - (4) The notice shall state in substance and effect as follows:
  - (a) The person, firm, trustee, or corporation filing the notice has furnished labor, professional services, materials, or equipment for which a lien is given by this chapter;
    - (b) The name of the prime residential contractor ordering the same;
- 34 (c) A common or street address of the real property being improved 35 or the legal description of the real property;
- 36 (d) The name, business address, and telephone number of the lien 37 claimant.

1	The notice may contain additional information but shall be in
2	substantially the following form:
3	NOTICE TO RESIDENTIAL HOMEOWNER OF LATE PAYMENT
4	(Authorized by RCW)
5	TO:
6	(Name of Homeowner)
7	
8	(Street Address)
9	
10	(City) (State) (Zip)
11	AND TO:
12	(Prime Residential Contractor)
13	(Name of Laborer, Professional, Materials, or Equipment Supplier)
14	whose business address is , did at the property located
15	at
16	(Check appropriate box) ( ) perform labor ( ) furnish professional
17	services ( ) provide materials ( ) supply equipment as follows:
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21	which was ordered by
22	(Name of Person)
23	whose address was stated to be
24	
25	The amount owing to the undersigned according to
26	contract or purchase order for labor, supplies, or equipment
27	(as abovementioned) is the sum of $\dots$ . $\dots$ Dollars
28	(\$). Said sums became due and owing as of
29	
30	(State Date)
31	
32	You are hereby notified that said amount owing is currently past
33	due by not less than fourteen days.

34 IMPORTANT

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Failure to rectify this payment deficiency may subject the residential homeowner to a lien pursuant to RCW 60.04.021.

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- (5) If a homeowner presents to the department, under penalty of perjury, the original or a true and accurate copy of the notice provided to the homeowner pursuant to this section, and the potential lien claimant commences a lien or other collection action pursuant to RCW 60.04.021(2), the department shall notify the prime residential contractor that it must file, within five business days, a surety bond or other good and sufficient security with the department in the amount of claimed deficient payment, unless the prime residential contractor supplies the department with written documentation that the residential homeowner was informed of the deficient payment pursuant to section 2(3)(b)(ii) of this act.
- 14 (6) The department shall suspend the registration of any prime 15 residential contractor while sufficient security as required under 16 subsection (5) of this section is not filed. The department may 17 establish by rule and charge a reasonable fee for the processing of 18 documents submitted to the department under this section.
- 19 **Sec. 5.** RCW 60.04.091 and 1992 c 126 s 7 are each amended to read 20 as follows:
  - Except as provided under subsection (3) of this section, every person claiming a lien under RCW 60.04.021 shall file for recording, in the county where the subject property is located, a notice of claim of lien not later than ninety days after the person has ceased to furnish labor, professional services, materials, or equipment or the last date on which employee benefit contributions were due. ((The notice of claim of lien:))
- 28 (1) The notice of claim of lien shall state in substance and 29 effect:
- 30 (a) The name,  $((\frac{phone}{phone}))$  <u>telephone</u> number, and address of the 31 claimant;
  - (b) The first ((and)) date on which the claimant began to perform labor, provide professional services, or supply material or equipment or the first date on which employee benefits became due;
- 35 <u>(c) The</u> last date on which the labor, professional services, 36 materials, or equipment was furnished or employee benefit contributions 37 were due;

1	$((c))$ $\underline{(d)}$ The name of the person indebted to the claimant;
2	$((\frac{d}{d}))$ <u>(e)</u> The street address, legal description, or other
3	description reasonably calculated to identify, for a person familiar
4	with the area, the location of the real property to be charged with the
5	lien;
6	$((\frac{e}{e}))$ The name of the owner or reputed owner of the property,
7	if known, and, if not known, that fact shall be stated; ((and
8	$\frac{(f)}{(g)}$ The principal amount for which the lien is claimed,
9	excluding any interest, late fees, costs, attorneys' fees, or similar
10	charges; and
11	(h) Whether the claimant is the assignee of the claim.
12	(2) The notice of claim of lien shall be signed by the claimant or
13	some person authorized to act on his or her behalf who shall
14	affirmatively state they have read or heard and understand the notice
15	of claim of lien ((and)), believe the ((notice of claim of lien))
16	contents to be true and correct, and the lien is not frivolous and is
17	not clearly excessive, under penalty of perjury, and shall be
18	acknowledged as set forth in the form below, or pursuant to chapter
19	64.08 RCW. If the lien has been assigned, the name of the assignee
20	shall be stated. Where an action to foreclose the lien has been
21	commenced such notice of claim of lien may be amended as pleadings may
22	be by order of the court insofar as the interests of third parties are
23	not adversely affected by such amendment. A claim of lien
24	substantially in the following form shall be sufficient:
25	CLAIM OF LIEN
26	, claimant, vs , name of person indebted
27	to claimant:
28	Notice is hereby given that the person named below claims a
29	lien pursuant to chapter $((64.04))$ 60.04 RCW. In support of
30	this lien the following information is submitted:
31	1. NAME OF LIEN CLAIMANT:
32	TELEPHONE NUMBER:
33	ADDRESS:
34	2. DATE ON WHICH THE CLAIMANT BEGAN TO PERFORM LABOR,
35	PROVIDE PROFESSIONAL SERVICES, SUPPLY MATERIAL OR EQUIPMENT OR
36	THE DATE ON WHICH EMPLOYEE BENEFIT CONTRIBUTIONS BECAME DUE:

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1	3. NAME OF PERSON INDEBTED TO THE CLAIMANT:
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3	4. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPERTY AGAINST WHICH A LIEN IS
4	CLAIMED (Street address, legal description or other information
5	that will reasonably describe the property):
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9	5. NAME OF THE OWNER OR REPUTED OWNER (If not known
10	state "unknown"):
11	6. THE LAST DATE ON WHICH LABOR WAS PERFORMED;
12	PROFESSIONAL SERVICES WERE FURNISHED; CONTRIBUTIONS TO AN
13	EMPLOYEE BENEFIT PLAN WERE DUE; OR MATERIAL, OR EQUIPMENT WAS
14	FURNISHED:
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16	7. PRINCIPAL AMOUNT FOR WHICH THE LIEN IS CLAIMED IS:
17	8. IF THE CLAIMANT IS THE ASSIGNEE OF THIS CLAIM SO
18	STATE HERE:
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20	, Claimant
21	
22	
23	(Phone number, address, city, and
24	state of claimant)
25	STATE OF WASHINGTON, COUNTY OF
26	, ss.
27	, being sworn, says: I am the claimant (or attorney of
28	the claimant, or administrator, representative, or agent of the
29	trustees of an employee benefit plan) above named; I have read or heard
30	and understand the foregoing claim, read and know the contents thereof,
31	and believe the same to be true and correct and that the claim of lien
32	is not frivolous and is made with reasonable cause, and is not clearly
33	excessive under penalty of perjury.
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1	Subscribed	and	sworn	to	before	me	this	•	•	•	•	day	οf	•	•	•	•	•	•
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The period provided for recording the claim of lien is a period of limitation and no action to foreclose a lien shall be maintained unless the claim of lien is filed for recording within the ninety-day period stated. The lien claimant shall give a copy of the claim of lien to the owner or reputed owner by mailing it by certified or registered mail or by personal service within fourteen days of the time the claim of lien is filed for recording. Failure to do so results in a forfeiture of any right the claimant may have to attorneys' fees and costs against the owner under RCW 60.04.181.

- (3) The time period during which a potential lien claimant has commenced and is maintaining a lien or other collection action against the prime residential contractor, pursuant to RCW 60.04.021(2), shall not be part of the period limited for the commencement of any action against the homeowner.
- **Sec. 6.** RCW 60.04.250 and 1990 c 81 s 1 are each amended to read 18 as follows:
  - The department of labor and industries shall prepare master documents that provide informational material about:
    - (1) Construction lien laws and available safeguards against real property lien claims. The material shall include methods of protection against lien claims, including obtaining lien release documents, performance bonds, joint payee checks, the opportunity to require contractor disclosure of all potential lien claimants as a condition of payment, and lender supervision under RCW 60.04.200 and 60.04.210. The material shall also include sources of further information, including the department of labor and industries and the office of the attorney general.
  - (2) The basics of lien law relating to owner-occupied residential improvements and new construction projects, including a list of available safeguards against real property lien claims, which the homeowner must consider, reject, or select. Before any building permit may be issued for the construction of a new owner-occupied single-family residence or for the improvement to an owner-occupied single-family residence for an amount in excess of one thousand

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dollars, if the construction will involve the services of a prime contractor, the permit issuing agency shall not issue any permit until the homeowner has personally, and not through an agent, acknowledged receipt of the document. When the homeowner completes the document by making selections, as indicated in the document, and submits it to the agency, the permit issuing agency shall maintain a copy of the completed document in the file of the permit issuing agency relating to the homeowner's permit application. The document shall be in substantially the following form and shall also include information describing the scope and limits of state contractor bonding requirements, the provisions of this act, and the availability of further information, including the department of labor and industries and the office of the attorney general.

## Dear Homeowner:

You must complete the items below and select from the options below what protection, if any, you want against potential lien claims on your property as a result of the construction work for which you are contracting. If your contractor fails to pay subcontractors, suppliers, or laborers or neglects to make other legally required payments, those who are owed money can file a lien against your property for payment, even if you have paid your contractor in full. Anyone filing a valid lien claim may force the sale of your property to recover the unpaid amount. This is true if you have hired a contractor to build a new home or are buying a newly built home. It is also true when you remodel or improve your property.

People who supply materials or labor ordered by your contractor are permitted by law to file a lien only if they do so within ninety days of cessation of performance or delivery of materials. The time frame is spelled out in RCW 60.04.091.

If you enter into a contract to buy a newly built home, you may not receive a notice of a lien based on a claim by a contractor or material handler. Be aware that a lien may be claimed even though you have not received a notice. Before making final payment on the project, obtain a completed lien release form from each contractor and material supplier. A sample of this release of lien form is available from the department of labor and industries, contractor registration section.

You have final responsibility for seeing that all bills are paid even if you have paid your contractor in full.

If you are dealing with a lending institution, ask your loan officer what precautions the lending institution takes to verify that subcontractors and material suppliers are being paid when mortgage money is paid to your contractor. You may want to request lender supervision if your lending institution is providing interim or construction financing. If you receive a notice to enforce a lien, take the notice seriously. Let your contractor know you have received the notice. Find out what arrangements are being made to pay the sender of the notice. When in doubt, or if you need more details, consult your attorney. When and how to pay your contractor is a decision that requires serious consideration. Washington law, RCW 18.27.114, requires contractors to give you this disclosure statement if your contract exceeds one thousand dollars. Complete the following information, select below how you want to protect yourself from possible lien claims on your property, and inform your contractor of your selections or discuss your selections with your contractor. am agreeing to have (contractor's name) perform the following construction work (basic description) at (location of your property using an address, legal description or approximate address) in the amount of \$ . . . . . . including all federal, state, and local taxes, and this amount may be adjusted only if authorized by me in writing. To protect myself against possible lien claims in the future for this work, I (select one): . . . will only issue checks made payable jointly,

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requesting payment.

\_... want the contractor to post a bond to assure both performance of this construction work and payment to all subcontractors

naming the contractor and the subcontractor or supplier as payees.

subcontractors in the amounts equal to the amounts for which lien

releases that release all lien rights to those amounts, as provided by

RCW 60.04.071, have been provided to me by each lien claimant

. . . . . will only issue checks to the contractor and

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- and suppliers in the amount of (select one) . . . the total contract 1 2 amount . . . in the amount of \$ . . . . . . . (Note: Your contractor may add the cost of this bond to your contract price.) 3 . . . . . . will be using . . . . . . as an escrow agent 4 to disburse construction funds and to protect my interests. (NOTE: 5 Before making this selection, find out whether the escrow agent you 6 7 plan to use will protect you against liens when disbursing payments. If you are interested in using this alternative, consult your 8 9 attorney.) . . . . . . . want this contractor to set up a trust account for 10 all funds I pay to this contractor, and the trust funds must be 11 disbursed in accordance with our construction agreement to 12 13 subcontractors and suppliers. . . . . . DO NOT want any of the above protections from 14 potential lien claims against my property as a result of this 15 16 construction work. 17 In addition to the above selection, I choose ONE of the following: . . . WANT . . . DO NOT WANT the prime residential contractor to 18 disclose all potential lien claimants as a condition of payment. 19 (NOTE: A lien claimant must, under RCW 60.04.091(2), mail by certified 20 or registered mail or by personal service a copy of the claim of lien 21 22 to the owner within fourteen days of the time the lien is recorded. While an action is ongoing, the law, RCW 60.04.151, allows an owner to 23 24 withhold from this prime residential contractor the amount of money for which a claim is recorded by a subcontractor, supplier, or laborer.) 25 More information about contractors is available by visiting the 26 27 department of labor and industries on the Internet at www.LNI.wa.gov/SCS/contractors/ or by calling the contractor 28 registration hotline at 1-800-647-0982. You may also call your local 29 department of labor and industries office. See listings under 30 31 "Washington state of" in the government section or the white pages of 32 the telephone book. Signed by (property owner): . . . . . . . . 33 Date signed: . . . . . . . . . . . . 34
- 35 **Sec. 7.** RCW 18.27.020 and 1997 c 314 s 3 are each amended to read as follows:
- 37 (1) Every contractor shall register with the department.
- 38 (2) It is a gross misdemeanor for any contractor to:

1 (a) Advertise, offer to do work, submit a bid, or perform any work 2 as a contractor without being registered as required by this chapter;

- (b) Advertise, offer to do work, submit a bid, or perform any work as a contractor when the contractor's registration is suspended or revoked;
- (c) Use a false or expired registration number in purchasing or offering to purchase an advertisement for which a contractor registration number is required; or
- (d) Transfer a valid registration to an unregistered contractor or allow an unregistered contractor to work under a registration issued to another contractor.
  - (3) It is not unlawful for a general contractor to employ an unregistered contractor who was registered at the time he or she entered into a contract with the general contractor, unless the general contractor or his or her representative has been notified in writing by the department of labor and industries that the contractor has become unregistered.
- (4) All ((misdemeanor)) actions under this chapter shall be prosecuted in the county where the infraction occurs.
- (5) A person is guilty of a separate gross misdemeanor for each day worked if, after the person receives a citation from the department, the person works while unregistered, or while his or her registration is suspended or revoked, or works under a registration issued to another contractor. A person is guilty of a separate gross misdemeanor for each worksite on which he or she violates subsection (2) of this section. Nothing in this subsection applies to a registered contractor.
- (6) The director by rule shall establish a two-year audit and monitoring program for a contractor not registered under this chapter who becomes registered after receiving an infraction or conviction under this chapter as an unregistered contractor. The director shall notify the departments of revenue and employment security of the infractions or convictions and shall cooperate with these departments to determine whether any taxes or registration, license, or other fees or penalties are owed the state.
- **Sec. 8.** RCW 60.04.035 and 1992 c 126 s 3 are each amended to read as follows:

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(1) The legislature finds that acts of coercion or attempted coercion, including threats to withhold future contracts, made by a contractor or developer to discourage a contractor, subcontractor, or material or equipment supplier from giving an owner the notice of right to claim a lien required by RCW 60.04.031, or from filing a claim of lien under this chapter are matters vitally affecting the public interest for the purpose of applying the consumer protection act, chapter 19.86 RCW.

- (2) The legislature further finds that acts of coercion or attempted coercion by a lien claimant or potential lien claimant against a residential homeowner, including but not limited to the lien claimant or potential lien claimant threatening to include or actually including in the principal amount of the lien claimed any interest, collection costs, or any amount other than the actual principal balance owed to the lien claimant for the goods and services provided to the homeowner, are matters vitally affecting the public interest for the purpose of applying the consumer protection act, chapter 19.86 RCW. Nothing in this section is intended to reduce or remove the authority of a court or arbitrator to award interest, costs, fees, and reasonable expenses, as provided in RCW 60.04.181(3) or otherwise.
  - (3) The legislature further finds that acts of coercion or attempted coercion by a lien claimant against a residential homeowner, including but not limited to the lien claimant or potential lien claimant threatening to file or actually filing a lien claim against the homeowner's property when the lien claimant knew or with ordinary diligence should have known that there existed a title insurance policy protecting the homeowner from such lien, are matters vitally affecting the public interest for the purpose of applying the consumer protection act, chapter 19.86 RCW.
  - (4) These acts of coercion are not reasonable in relation to the development and preservation of business. These acts of coercion shall constitute an unfair or deceptive act or practice in trade or commerce for the purpose of applying the consumer protection act, chapter 19.86 RCW.
- **Sec. 9.** RCW 60.04.011 and 1992 c 126 s 1 are each amended to read as follows:

1 Unless the context requires otherwise, the definitions in this 2 section apply throughout this chapter.

- (1) "Construction agent" means any registered or licensed contractor, registered or licensed subcontractor, architect, engineer, or other person having charge of any improvement to real property, who shall be deemed the agent of the owner for the limited purpose of establishing the lien created by this chapter.
- (2) "Contract price" means the amount, including overhead and profit, agreed upon by the contracting parties, or if no amount is agreed upon, then the customary and reasonable charge therefor, but in no case shall "contract price" include any amount payable under the contract, or otherwise, in the event of nonpayment or late payment.
- 13 (3) "Draws" means periodic disbursements of interim or construction 14 financing by a lender.
  - (4) "Furnishing labor, professional services, materials, or equipment" means the performance of any labor or professional services, the contribution owed to any employee benefit plan on account of any labor, the provision of any supplies or materials, and the renting, leasing, or otherwise supplying of equipment for the improvement of real property.
  - (5) "Improvement" means: (a) Constructing, altering, repairing, remodeling, demolishing, clearing, grading, or filling in, of, to, or upon any real property or street or road in front of or adjoining the same; (b) planting of trees, vines, shrubs, plants, hedges, or lawns, or providing other landscaping materials on any real property; and (c) providing professional services upon real property or in preparation for or in conjunction with the intended activities in (a) or (b) of this subsection.
  - (6) "Interim or construction financing" means that portion of money secured by a mortgage, deed of trust, or other encumbrance to finance improvement of, or to real property, but does not include:
    - (a) Funds to acquire real property;
- 33 (b) Funds to pay interest, insurance premiums, lease deposits, 34 taxes, assessments, or prior encumbrances;
- 35 (c) Funds to pay loan, commitment, title, legal, closing, 36 recording, or appraisal fees;
- 37 (d) Funds to pay other customary fees, which pursuant to agreement

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with the owner or borrower are to be paid by the lender from time to time;

- (e) Funds to acquire personal property for which the potential lien claimant may not claim a lien pursuant to this chapter.
- (7) "Labor" means exertion of the powers of body or mind performed at the site for compensation. "Labor" includes amounts due and owed to any employee benefit plan on account of such labor performed.
- (8) "Mortgagee" means a person who has a valid mortgage of record or deed of trust of record securing a loan.
- (9) "Owner-occupied" means a single-family residence occupied by the owner as his or her principal residence.
- (10) "Payment bond" means a surety bond issued by a surety licensed to issue surety bonds in the state of Washington that confers upon potential claimants the rights of third party beneficiaries.
- (11) "Potential lien claimant" means any person or entity entitled to assert lien rights under this chapter who has otherwise complied with the provisions of this chapter and is registered or licensed if required to be licensed or registered by the provisions of the laws of the state of Washington.
- (12) "Prime contractor" includes all contractors, general contractors, and specialty contractors, as defined by chapter 18.27 or 19.28 RCW, or who are otherwise required to be registered or licensed by law, who contract directly with a property owner or their common law agent to assume primary responsibility for the creation of an improvement to real property, and includes property owners or their common law agents who are contractors, general contractors, or specialty contractors as defined in chapter 18.27 or 19.28 RCW, or who are otherwise required to be registered or licensed by law, who offer to sell their property without occupying or using the structures, projects, developments, or improvements for more than one year.
- (13) "Professional services" means surveying, establishing or marking the boundaries of, preparing maps, plans, or specifications for, or inspecting, testing, or otherwise performing any other architectural or engineering services for the improvement of real property.
- 36 (14) "Real property lender" means a bank, savings bank, savings and 37 loan association, credit union, mortgage company, or other corporation,

association, partnership, trust, or individual that makes loans secured by real property located in the state of Washington.

- (15) "Residential homeowner" or "homeowner" means the owner or potential owner who occupies or has entered into a contract with a contractor, builder, or developer to occupy a single-family residence at the completion of the new construction, repair, alteration, or remodel of the single-family residence or garage appurtenant to the residence.
- 9 (16) "Site" means the real property which is or is to be improved.
  10 (((16))) (17) "Subcontractor" means a general contractor or
  11 specialty contractor as defined by chapter 18.27 or 19.28 RCW, or who
  12 is otherwise required to be registered or licensed by law, who
  13 contracts for the improvement of real property with someone other than
  14 the owner of the property or their common law agent.
- **Sec. 10.** RCW 60.04.031 and 1992 c 126 s 2 are each amended to read 16 as follows:
  - (1) Except as otherwise provided in this section, every person furnishing professional services, materials, or equipment for the improvement of real property shall give the owner or reputed owner notice in writing of the right to claim a lien. If the prime contractor is in compliance with the requirements of RCW 19.27.095, 60.04.230, and 60.04.261, this notice shall also be given to the prime contractor as described in this subsection unless the potential lien claimant has contracted directly with the prime contractor. The notice may be given at any time but only protects the right to claim a lien for professional services, materials, or equipment supplied after the date which is sixty days before:
  - (a) Mailing the notice by certified or registered mail to the owner or reputed owner; or
  - (b) Delivering or serving the notice personally upon the owner or reputed owner and obtaining evidence of delivery in the form of a receipt or other acknowledgement signed by the owner or reputed owner or an affidavit of service.

In the case of new construction, repair, alteration, or remodel of a single-family residence or garage appurtenant to a single-family residence, the notice of a right to claim a lien may be given at any

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time but only protects the right to claim a lien for professional services, materials, or equipment supplied after a date which is ten days before the notice is given as described in this subsection.

- (2) Notices of a right to claim a lien shall not be required of:
- (a) Persons who contract directly with the owner or the owner's common law agent;
- (b) Laborers whose claim of lien is based solely on performing labor; or
- (c) Subcontractors who contract for the improvement of real property directly with the prime contractor, except as provided in subsection (3)(b) of this section.
- (3) Persons who furnish professional services, materials, or equipment in connection with the <u>new construction</u>, repair, alteration, or remodel of ((an existing owner occupied)) <u>a</u> single-family residence or appurtenant garage:
- (a) Who contract directly with the ((owner-occupier or their)) owner or the owner's common law agent shall not be required to send a written notice of the right to claim a lien and shall have a lien for the full amount due under their contract, as provided in RCW 60.04.021; or
- (b) Who do not contract directly with the ((owner occupier or their)) owner or the owner's common law agent shall give notice of the right to claim a lien to the ((owner occupier)) owner. ((Liens of persons furnishing professional services, materials, or equipment who do not contract directly with the owner occupier or their common law agent may only be satisfied from amounts not yet paid to the prime contractor by the owner at the time the notice described in this section is received, regardless of whether amounts not yet paid to the prime contractor are due. For the purposes of this subsection "received" means actual receipt of notice by personal service, or registered or certified mail, or three days after mailing by registered or certified mail, excluding Saturdays, Sundays, or legal holidays.))
- (4) The notice of right to claim a lien described in subsection (1) of this section, shall include but not be limited to the following information and shall substantially be in the following form, using lower-case and upper-case ten-point type where appropriate.

37 NOTICE TO OWNER

38 IMPORTANT: READ BOTH SIDES OF THIS NOTICE

1	CAREFULLY.
2	PROTECT YOURSELF FROM PAYING TWICE
3	To: Date:
4	Re: (description of property: Street address or general location.)
5	From:
б	AT THE REQUEST OF: (Name of person ordering the professional
7	services, materials, or equipment)
8	THIS IS NOT A LIENTHIS NOTICE IS MEANT TO PROVIDE YOU WITH
9	INFORMATION NECESSARY TO PROPERLY MANAGE YOUR CONSTRUCTION PROJECT:
10	This notice is sent to you to tell you who is providing professional
11	services, materials, or equipment for the improvement of your property
12	and to advise you of the rights of these persons and your
13	responsibilities. Also take note that laborers on your project may
14	claim a lien without sending you a notice.
15	OWNER/OCCUPIER OF EXISTING
16	RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY AND/OR
17	NEW RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY
18	
19	Under Washington law, those who furnish labor, professional services,
20	materials, or equipment for the repair, remodel, or alteration of your
21	owner-occupied principal residence and who are not paid, have a right
22	to enforce their claim for payment against your property. This claim
23	is known as a construction lien.
24	The law limits the amount that a lien claimant can claim against your
25	property. ((Claims may only be made against that portion of the
26	contract price you have not yet paid to your prime contractor as of the
27	time this notice was given to you or three days after this notice was
28	mailed to you.)) If the improvement to your property is new
29	construction, repair, alteration, or remodel of a single-family
30	residence or its appurtenant garage, a lien may be claimed for some or
31	all professional services, materials, or equipment furnished after a
32	date that is ten days before this notice was given to you or mailed to
33	you. Review the back of this notice for more information and ways to
34	avoid lien claims.
35	COMMERCIAL (( <del>AND/OR NEW</del>

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1	RESIDENTIAL)) PROPERTY
2	We have or will be providing professional services, materials, or
3	equipment for the improvement of your commercial ((or new residential))
4	project. In the event you or your contractor fail to pay us, we may
5	file a lien against your property. A lien may be claimed for all
6	professional services, materials, or equipment furnished after a date
7	that is sixty days before this notice was given to you or mailed to
8 9	you((, unless the improvement to your property is the construction of a new single-family residence, then ten days before this notice was
10	given to you or mailed to you)).
11 12	Sender:
13	Address:
	<del>-</del>
14 15	Brief description of professional services, materials, or equipment provided or to be provided:
16	IMPORTANT INFORMATION
17	ON REVERSE SIDE
18	IMPORTANT INFORMATION
19	FOR YOUR PROTECTION
20	This notice is sent to inform you that we have or will provide
21	professional services, materials, or equipment for the improvement of
22	your property. We expect to be paid by the person who ordered our
23	services, but if we are not paid, we have the right to enforce our
24	claim by filing a construction lien against your property.
25	LEARN more about the lien laws and the meaning of this notice by
26	discussing them with your contractor, suppliers, Department of Labor
27 28	and Industries, the firm sending you this notice, your lender, or your attorney.
29	COMMON METHODS TO AVOID CONSTRUCTION LIENS: There are several methods
30	available to protect your property from construction liens. The
31	following are two of the more commonly used methods.
32	DUAL PAYCHECKS (Joint Checks): When paying your contractor for
33	services or materials, you may make checks payable jointly to
34	the contractor and the firms furnishing you this notice.
35	LIEN RELEASES: You may require your contractor to provide lien

releases signed by all the suppliers and subcontractors from 1 2 whom you have received this notice. If they cannot obtain lien releases because you have not paid them, you may use the dual 3 payee check method to protect yourself. 4 YOU SHOULD TAKE APPROPRIATE STEPS TO PROTECT YOUR PROPERTY FROM LIENS.

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YOUR PRIME CONTRACTOR AND YOUR CONSTRUCTION LENDER ARE REQUIRED BY LAW 6 TO GIVE YOU WRITTEN INFORMATION ABOUT LIEN CLAIMS. IF YOU HAVE NOT 7 8

RECEIVED IT, ASK THEM FOR IT.

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(5) Every potential lien claimant providing professional services where no improvement as defined in RCW 60.04.011(5) (a) or (b) has been commenced, and the professional services provided are not visible from an inspection of the real property may record in the real property records of the county where the property is located a notice which shall contain the professional service provider's name, address, telephone number, legal description of the property, the owner or reputed owner's name, and the general nature of the professional services provided. If such notice is not recorded, the lien claimed shall be subordinate to the interest of any subsequent mortgagee and invalid as to the interest of any subsequent purchaser if the mortgagee or purchaser acts in good faith and for a valuable consideration acquires an interest in the property prior to the commencement of an improvement as defined in RCW 60.04.011(5) (a) or (b) without notice of the professional services being provided. The notice described in this subsection shall be substantially in the following form:

26 NOTICE OF FURNISHING 27 PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

That on the \_\_\_(day)\_\_ day of \_\_\_(month and year)\_\_, \_\_\_(name of 28 29 provider) began providing professional services upon or for the 30 improvement of real property legally described as follows:

31 [Legal Description is mandatory] 32

33 The general nature of the professional services provided is . . 34 The owner or reputed owner of the real property is . . . . . . . . .

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1	
2	(Signature)
3	
4	(Name of Claimant)
5	
6	(Street Address)
7	
8	(City, State, Zip Code)
9	
10	(Phone Number)

11 (6) A lien authorized by this chapter shall not be enforced unless 12 the lien claimant has complied with the applicable provisions of this 13 section.

- 14 **Sec. 11.** RCW 18.27.030 and 2001 c 159 s 2 are each amended to read 15 as follows:
  - (1) An applicant for registration as a contractor shall submit an application under oath upon a form to be prescribed by the director and which shall include the following information pertaining to the applicant:
    - (a) Employer social security number.

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- 21 (b) Unified business identifier number, if required by the 22 department of revenue.
  - (c) Evidence of workers' compensation coverage for the applicant's employees working in Washington, as follows:
  - (i) The applicant's industrial insurance account number issued by the department;
- 27 (ii) The applicant's self-insurer number issued by the department; 28 or
- (iii) For applicants domiciled in a state or province of Canada subject to an agreement entered into under RCW 51.12.120(7), as permitted by the agreement, filing a certificate of coverage issued by the agency that administers the workers' compensation law in the applicant's state or province of domicile certifying that the applicant has secured the payment of compensation under the other state's or province's workers' compensation law.

(d) Employment security department number.

- (e) State excise tax registration number.
- (f) Unified business identifier (UBI) account number may be substituted for the information required by (c) of this subsection if the applicant will not employ employees in Washington, and by (d) and (e) of this subsection.
- (g) Type of contracting activity, whether a general or a specialty contractor and if the latter, the type of specialty, and whether the contractor engages or intends to engage in the new construction, repair, alteration, or remodel of the single-family residence or appurtenant garage of any residential homeowner, as defined in RCW 60.04.011.
- (h)(i) The name and address of each partner if the applicant is a firm or partnership, or the name and address of the owner if the applicant is an individual proprietorship, or the name and address of the corporate officers and statutory agent, if any, if the applicant is a corporation or the name and address of all members of other business entities.
- (ii) The name and address of the six persons who received or are entitled to receive the most compensation from the prime residential contractor, regardless of whether the compensation is provided as salary, wages, profits, or otherwise, during the term of the contractor's registration; and, if different, each principal, partner, officer, director, vice principal, authorized purchasing agent, and management employee who has physical or actual control over the accounting or disbursement of funds received by the contractor from residential homeowners if the applicant is a contractor engaging in the new construction, repair, alteration, or remodel of the single-family residence or appurtenant garage of any residential homeowner, as defined in RCW 60.04.011. An applicant shall update information required under this section no less frequently than once every six months if there is a change in the persons required to be identified under this section.
- (iii) A business engaging in the new construction, repair, alteration, or remodel of the single-family residence or appurtenant garage of any residential homeowner, as defined in RCW 60.04.011, shall not be required to provide the names and other information specified in

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(h)(ii) of this subsection if the business increases the amount of the surety bond filed with the department pursuant to RCW 18.27.040(1) to two hundred fifty thousand dollars.

- (iv) The information contained in such application is a matter of public record and open to public inspection.
- (2) The department may verify the workers' compensation coverage information provided by the applicant under subsection (1)(c) of this section, including but not limited to information regarding the coverage of an individual employee of the applicant. If coverage is provided under the laws of another state, the department may notify the other state that the applicant is employing employees in Washington.
- (3)(a) The department shall deny an application for registration if: (i) The applicant has been previously performing work subject to this chapter as a sole proprietor, partnership, corporation, or other entity and the department has notice that the applicant has an unsatisfied final judgment against him or her in an action based on this chapter or the applicant owes the department money for penalties assessed or fees due under this chapter as a result of a final judgment; (ii) the applicant was a principal or officer of a partnership, corporation, or other entity that either has an unsatisfied final judgment against it in an action that was incurred for work performed subject to this chapter or owes the department money for penalties assessed or fees due under this chapter as a result of a final judgment; or (iii) the applicant does not have a valid unified business identifier number, if required by the department of revenue.
- (b) The department shall suspend an active registration if (i) the department has notice that the registrant is a sole proprietor or a principal or officer of a registered contractor that has an unsatisfied final judgment against it for work within the scope of this chapter; or (ii) the applicant does not maintain a valid unified business identifier number, if required by the department of revenue.
- (4) The department shall not deny an application or suspend a registration because of an unsatisfied final judgment if the applicant's or registrant's unsatisfied final judgment was determined by the director to be the result of the fraud or negligence of another party.

1 **Sec. 12.** RCW 18.27.040 and 2001 c 159 s 3 are each amended to read 2 as follows:

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- (1) Each applicant shall file with the department a surety bond issued by a surety insurer who meets the requirements of chapter 48.28 RCW in the sum of twelve thousand dollars if the applicant is a general contractor and six thousand dollars if the applicant is a specialty contractor. If no valid bond is already on file with the department at the time the application is filed, a bond must accompany the registration application. The bond shall have the state of Washington named as obligee with good and sufficient surety in a form to be approved by the department. The bond shall be continuous and may be canceled by the surety upon the surety giving written notice to the director. A cancellation or revocation of the bond or withdrawal of the surety from the bond automatically suspends the registration issued to the registrant until a new bond or reinstatement notice has been filed and approved as provided in this section. The bond shall be conditioned that the applicant will pay all persons performing labor, including employee benefits, for the contractor, will pay all taxes and contributions due to the state of Washington, and will pay all persons furnishing labor or material or renting or supplying equipment to the contractor and will pay all amounts that may be adjudged against the contractor by reason of breach of contract including negligent or improper work in the conduct of the contracting business. A change in the name of a business or a change in the type of business entity shall not impair a bond for the purposes of this section so long as one of the original applicants for such bond maintains partial ownership in the business covered by the bond.
- (2) At the time of initial registration or renewal, the contractor shall provide a bond or other security deposit as required by this chapter and comply with all of the other provisions of this chapter before the department shall issue or renew the contractor's certificate of registration. Any contractor registered as of July 1, 2001, who maintains that registration in accordance with this chapter is in compliance with this chapter until the next renewal of the contractor's certificate of registration.
- (3) Any person, firm, or corporation having a claim against the contractor for any of the items referred to in this section may bring suit upon the bond or deposit in the superior court of the county in

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which the work was done or of any county in which jurisdiction of the contractor may be had. The surety issuing the bond shall be named as a party to any suit upon the bond. Action upon the bond or deposit brought by a residential homeowner for breach of contract by a party to the construction contract shall be commenced by filing the summons and complaint with the clerk of the appropriate superior court within two years from the date the claimed contract work was substantially completed or abandoned. Action upon the bond or deposit brought by any other authorized party shall be commenced by filing the summons and complaint with the clerk of the appropriate superior court within one year from the date the claimed labor was performed and benefits accrued, taxes and contributions owing the state of Washington became due, materials and equipment were furnished, or the claimed contract work was substantially completed or abandoned. Service of process in an action against the contractor, the contractor's bond, or the deposit shall be exclusively by service upon the department. Three copies of the summons and complaint and a fee adopted by rule of not less than twenty dollars to cover the costs shall be served by registered or certified mail, or other delivery service requiring notice of receipt, upon the department at the time suit is started and the department shall maintain a record, available for public inspection, of all suits so commenced. Service is not complete until the department receives the fee and three copies of the summons and complaint. shall constitute service on the registrant and the surety for suit upon the bond or deposit and the department shall transmit the summons and complaint or a copy thereof to the registrant at the address listed in the registrant's application and to the surety within two days after it shall have been received.

(4) The surety upon the bond shall not be liable in an aggregate amount in excess of the amount named in the bond nor for any monetary penalty assessed pursuant to this chapter for an infraction. The liability of the surety shall not cumulate where the bond has been renewed, continued, reinstated, reissued or otherwise extended. The surety upon the bond may, upon notice to the department and the parties, tender to the clerk of the court having jurisdiction of the action an amount equal to the claims thereunder or the amount of the bond less the amount of judgments, if any, previously satisfied therefrom and to the extent of such tender the surety upon the bond

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shall be exonerated but if the actions commenced and pending at any one time exceed the amount of the bond then unimpaired, claims shall be satisfied from the bond in the following order:

- (a) Employee labor and claims of laborers, including employee benefits;
- (b) Claims for breach of contract by a party to the construction contract;
  - (c) Registered or licensed subcontractors, material, and equipment;
  - (d) Taxes and contributions due the state of Washington;
- (e) Any court costs, interest, and ((attorney's [attorneys'])) attorneys' fees plaintiff may be entitled to recover. The surety is not liable for any amount in excess of the penal limit of its bond.

A payment made by the surety in good faith exonerates the bond to the extent of any payment made by the surety.

- (5) The total amount paid from a bond or deposit required of a general contractor by this section to claimants other than residential homeowners must not exceed one-half of the bond amount. The total amount paid from a bond or deposit required of a specialty contractor by this section to claimants other than residential homeowners must not exceed one-half of the bond amount or four thousand dollars, whichever is greater.
- (6) The prevailing party in an action filed under this section against the contractor and contractor's bond or deposit, for breach of contract by a party to a construction contract, is entitled to costs, interest, and reasonable attorneys' fees. The surety upon the bond is not liable in an aggregate amount in excess of the amount named in the bond nor for any monetary penalty assessed pursuant to this chapter for an infraction.
- (7) If a final judgment impairs the liability of the surety upon the bond so furnished that there is not in effect a bond in the full amount prescribed in this section, the registration of the contractor is automatically suspended until the bond liability in the required amount unimpaired by unsatisfied judgment claims is furnished.
- (8) In lieu of the surety bond required by this section the contractor may file with the department a deposit consisting of cash or other security acceptable to the department.
- (9) Any person having filed and served a summons and complaint as required by this section having an unsatisfied final judgment against

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- the registrant for any items referred to in this section may execute upon the security held by the department by serving a certified copy of the unsatisfied final judgment by registered or certified mail upon the department within one year of the date of entry of such judgment. Upon the receipt of service of such certified copy the department shall pay or order paid from the deposit, through the registry of the superior court which rendered judgment, towards the amount of the unsatisfied judgment. The priority of payment by the department shall be the order of receipt by the department, but the department shall have no liability for payment in excess of the amount of the deposit.
  - (10) The director ((may)) shall require an applicant applying to renew or reinstate a registration or applying for a new registration to file a bond of  $((up \ to \ three))$  at least two times, but not more than five times the normally required amount, if the director determines that:
  - (a) An applicant, or a previous registration of a corporate officer, owner, or partner of a current applicant, has had in the past five years a total of six final judgments in actions under this chapter involving a residential single-family dwelling on two or more different structures; or
  - (b) The applicant engages in the new construction, repair, alteration, or remodel of the single-family residence or appurtenant garage of any residential homeowner, as defined in RCW 60.04.011, and the applicant or any of the applicant's principals, partners, officers, directors, vice principals, authorized purchasing agents, or management employees who have physical or actual control over the accounting or disbursement of funds received by the contractor from residential homeowners have been party to collection action or lien action instituted pursuant to RCW 60.04.021(2)(a)(i), where the claims against parties other than the residential homeowner were insufficient to satisfy the lien.
- 32 (11) The director may adopt rules necessary for the proper 33 administration of the security.

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